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ABSTRACT

The creative writing program described in this lesson exposes middle school student to wordless picture books and helps them to develop story lines orally and in writing. During the four 45-minute lessons, students will: explore various wordless picture books; develop oral story lines for wordless picture books; develop written story lines for wordless picture books; and critique story lines developed by peers. The instructional plan, lists of web and conventional resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A peer critique rubric is attached. (PM)

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Creative Writing Through Wordless Picture Books

ED 477 997

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Grade Band

6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Four 45-minute sessions

Overview

Wordless picture books offer a wonderful foundation for creative writing. Often, students struggle with ideas and topics for writing. This genre of books offers a platform for students to develop their writing skills. In this lesson, students are exposed to wordless picture books and begin developing story lines orally and in writing. Educators can easily incorporate various instructional strategies into students' writing, such as use of dialogue, setting development, character descriptions, sequencing of events, and story development. An online, interactive Story Map is used to assist students in developing story lines.

From Theory to Practice

Cassady, J.K. (1998). Wordless books: No-risk tools for inclusive middle-grade classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 41,* 428-432.

- David Wiesner (author of *Tuesday*) identifies one of the most valuable characteristics of wordless books—the endless possibilities for creative interpretations.
- Wordless books enhance creativity, vocabulary, and language development for readers of all ages, at all stages of cognitive development, and in all content areas.
- The creativity stimulated by wordless books encourages older students to look more closely at story details, to carefully consider all story elements, and to more clearly understand how text is organized so that a story develops.

Reese, C. (1996). Story development using wordless picture books. *The Reading Teacher, 50,* 172-173.

- Through discussion and critical examination of the details of the illustrations, students wrote sentences that effectively complemented the pictures.
- Students were able to build their reading and writing skills and strategies to ultimately produce a unique book.

Student Objectives

Students will:

- Explore various wordless picture books
- Develop oral story lines for wordless picture books
- Develop written story lines for wordless picture books
- Critique story lines developed by peers

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Resources

- Peer Critique Rubric
- *You Can't Take a Balloon into the National Gallery* by Weitzmann and Glasser (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2000)
- Interactive Story Map
- Post-it notes (3 X 5 size, lined is preferred)
- Student response journals
- Various wordless picture books:

  Wordless Picture Books (Washburn University)

  Children's Wordless Picture Books (Weber County Library)

  Wordless Picture Books (Louisville Free Public Library)

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Secure multiple copies of *You Can't Take a Balloon into the National Gallery.*
2. Secure copies of a wide range of wordless picture books, gathering at least one book for each student. The following Web resources provide a listing of wordless picture books:
   - Wordless Picture Books (Washburn University)
   - Children's Wordless Picture Books (Weber County Library)
   - Wordless Picture Books (Louisville Free Public Library)

Instruction and Activities

Opening activity

Read a wordless picture book to the class by developing a story line to go along with the pictures. After reading, ask students if they would have created a different story for the book. Reread the same book asking students to volunteer to develop a story line for each page. Explain how everyone can have a different interpretation of a book.

Paired reading

Group students in pairs to select and read a wordless picture book together. Students should have the opportunity to create their own story line for the book and tell the story to their partner.

Small-group activity

Gather three to four students in a small group to develop a story for the book *You Can't Take a Balloon into the National Gallery.* Explain that the story line should be created as a group. Each group should read through the book first, discuss ideas, and then develop a story line to go along with the illustrations. The text for each page should be written on Post-it notes and placed on the coordinating pages of the book.

Whole-class discussion

Invite each group to read aloud their original story for the book *You Can't Take a Balloon into the National Gallery*. Discuss the similarities and differences between each group's interpretation of the story. During the discussion, help students identify the setting, main character, conflict, and resolution, and model how to use the interactive Story Map tool.

Response journal activity

Have students complete a journal entry in response to the whole-class discussion about story lines for *You Can't Take a Balloon into the National Gallery*. Ask them the following questions:

- Which story line was your favorite?
- Why was it your favorite?
- What made it enjoyable?

Independent work

Students select a wordless picture book from the classroom library to read and develop an original story line. Using the interactive Story Map tool, students begin to write their story line by identifying the setting, main character, conflict, and resolution. Once students complete the online Story Map, each map should be printed and used as a guide to further develop their story. Stories should incorporate elements of writing that include, but are not limited to:

- Use of dialogue
- Setting development
- Character descriptions
- Sequencing of events
- Story development

Pair-and-share conference

Students share their story lines with another student for critique. Comments and suggestions are provided for further story development. Students use a Peer Critique Rubric to complete this task.

Independent revision

Any revisions that are necessary are made based on the pair-and-share conference.

Whole-class sharing

Students read their original story to the class.

Extensions

Review and bookmark the National Gallery of Art: Kids website. Invite students to access the online interactive tour of the museum by clicking on one of the pictures at the top of the page. Each picture will take them to a different exhibit, including a tour of the sculpture garden. Ask students to compare the online museum to the museum pictures presented in the book *You Can't Take a Balloon into the National Gallery*. Using their response journals, students respond to the following guiding questions:

- How does the museum on the website differ from the museum presented in the book?

- What does the author do well in portraying the museum?
- What is the most realistic illustration or part in the book?

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Teacher observation of student participation in whole-class and small-group activities
- Journal response entries
- Student development of a story line, including completion of the online Story Map

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IRA/NCTE Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

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Peer Critique Rubric

Author's Name: _____

Reviewer's Name: _____

Place a checkmark on the line if the story includes each of the following:

SETTING:

Where the story takes place _____
Time (past, present, future) _____

MAIN CHARACTER:

Physical description _____
Personality/characteristics _____

CONFLICT: Is there a problem? _____

RESOLUTION: Is there a solution? _____

Does the story line match the illustrations? _____

Is the story enjoyable to read? _____

Complete the following statements:

I liked the story because _____

_____

_____

You could improve the story by adding or changing _____

_____

_____

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